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ABSTRACT

Student learning is the bottom line for nearly all efforts to establish a national test system. Major efforts in this area are summarized in this paper. The various efforts seem to move ahead independently, but some common ideas include: (1) creating a national assessment system rather than a single test; (2) developing more than multiple-choice tests, especially performance based assessments; (3) devising subject matter standards for assessment development; (4) increasing understanding of commonalities and differences among subject matter areas; (5) clarifying the consequences of use of national assessments; and (6) investigating the impact of national assessment efforts on fundamental teaching and learning. Two attachments are included. Attachment A describes current alternatives being discussed to measure student learning on a national basis. Choices include the National Assessment of Educational Progress and other state and national alternatives. Attachment B contains a chart with further details on these alternatives. The addresses of 14 contact persons and their organizations are listed. (SLD)

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DOES A NATIONAL TEST/EXAMINATION SYSTEM SUPPORT OR UNDERMINE HIGHER STUDENT LEARNING?

Beverly L. Anderson & Dolores Ellis

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DOES A NATIONAL TEST/EXAMINATION SYSTEM SUPPORT OR UNDERMINE HIGHER STUDENT LEARNING?

Since the 1989 education summit between President Bush and the nation's governors, a virtual explosion of efforts to create national standards of educational excellence as well as national examinations to measure them has occurred. Prior to that event, few people thought such an idea would ever take hold.

Now we find a confusing array of voices and activities surfacing. Some are focused on standards in subject matter areas, some on measurement of the national goals established by the president and governors or national goals established by other groups, some on national indicators of general educational progress, some on national standards and assessment of educational professionals and some on national standards and assessments of student learning.

Since student learning is the bottom line for nearly all of these efforts, measures in this area are of particular importance. The pages that follow summarize major efforts focused in this arena. The October 23, 1991 issue of **Education Week** provides information on some of the efforts that go beyond the student assessment domain.

Given that education is constitutionally a state-level, not a national, responsibility, the country is in the unique position of trying to create a consensus about what all students should know and be able to do without having any one institution drive the effort. Such an approach, on one hand, is creating great confusion; yet, on the other hand, it is mobilizing groups at all levels of the education system to rethink their perspective and involvement in the national groundswell of efforts to refocus education.

Although the various efforts are moving forward seemingly independently, there are a few key people and organizations involved across the efforts forming a web of common ideas. Common ideas that are surfacing include:

- Create a national assessment system, not a single national test. This might mean, for example, having states or other educational units work in clusters to develop different assessments that meet a common national standard.

- More than multiple-choice tests are needed. Performance based assessments that reflect skills needed in the workplace and reflect real world situations need to be included.

- Subject matter areas--science, social studies, mathematics, etc.--need to identify standards around which assessments can be developed as soon as possible.

- Commonalities and differences among subject matter areas need to be understood as assessment efforts continue.

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- The consequences of the use of national assessments need to be clarified, i.e., what are the consequences for individual students if they do not pass an assessment? What are the consequences for a school, district or state if their students are at particular levels of performance?

- The impact of national assessment efforts on fundamental reform of teaching and learning needs to be carefully investigated.

Much discussion is underway about assessment, but the actual development of measures exists in a wide range of stages. Some, such as Educate America, Inc., are not currently engaging in test development; whereas, the New Standards Project has substantial funding from private foundations to undertake research and development. The College Board is also putting money into development of assessments. A consortium of states are working together to infuse their current state assessments with new types of measures, while the National Assessment of Educational Progress has been conducting national examinations for over 20 years. Each of these efforts and more are studying a wide range of adjustments and adaptations to position themselves to play a role in the unclear and emerging national arena of assessment.

It seems likely that greater coordination, clarification of purpose and coherence of efforts will be needed at the national level, but it is not yet apparent what type of coordinating body will emerge.

Attachment A contains brief descriptions of current alternatives being discussed to measure the progress of student learning on a national basis. These alternatives fall into several categories. First of all, there are variations of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) being discussed. The federally mandated NAEP has been in existence for over twenty years. It is the only existing national assessment of student progress that reflects trends over time for a nationally representative sample of students. Until recently, state by state data was not available, but efforts are now underway to include that possibility.

Second, nearly every state has its own statewide student assessment program. Efforts are underway to see if there are ways to calibrate the assessments in some fashion that would allow for comparisons across states.

Third, several tests used nationally at or near the end of high school might be viable choices. These tests, however, are administered only to those students who choose to take the tests. The General Educational Development (GED) is a test used to enable persons who have not graduated from high school to demonstrate mastery of skills and knowledge normally acquired through four years of secondary school study. The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and American Council on Testing (ACT) are tests commonly used by universities and colleges to help make decisions about potential students' likelihood of succeeding in their institution.

Fourth, several ideas are circulating about the development of new measures of student achievement. Some of these are driven by recently published reports. The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) report and *America's Choice: High Skill/Low Wages* both call for assessments that include more emphasis on the skills needed for success in the workforce whether or not a student pursues post-secondary education.

Others are driven by some combination of the work of the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP, the panel charged by the nation's governors and President Bush to determine how to monitor the six national goals), the National Council on Education Standards and Testing (NCREST) established by a congressional mandate in June 1991 or the America 2000 strategy presented recently by the U.S. Department of Education.

The New Standards Project, led by Marc Tucker and Lauren Resnick and based at the University of Pittsburgh, appears to be making the most progress in developing a new measurement approach. This project is a joint effort of the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) and the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh. This effort has received substantial funding from private foundations and has sixteen states or large districts involved as partners in the design.

Attachment B contains a chart with further details on these alternatives.

The key question before us now is "What difference will it make in student learning to have one of these national measures of student achievement?" "How will various alternatives support or undermine higher student learning?" The panelists for this session will each present their view on these questions.

Attachment A

SYNOPSES OF ALTERNATIVES

A. NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS (NAEP)

NAEP is an assessment program currently run under contract to the U.S. Department of Education by the Educational Testing Service (ETS). NAEP, initiated in 1969 by federal legislation, is the only national longitudinal assessment of student learning.

Assessments are administered every other year to a nationally representative sample of students in grades four, eight, and twelve. It was mandated to track achievement in math, reading, writing, science and other subjects (which have included history and the arts) utilizing not only multiple-choice and open-ended questions, but also performance assessments such as expository prose.

The results of these tests are used to determine the "educational progress" of students throughout the country and are summarized in the "Nation's Report Card." Data show national and regional trends, but the sample is not designed for school, district, or state comparisons. (However, see NAEP-Trial State Assessment for a variation.)

B. NATIONAL ASSESSMENT GOVERNING BOARD (NAGB)

The National Assessment Governing Board was established in 1988 under the Stafford-Hawkins Education Amendment (PL-100-297) as an advisory board responsible for recommending the direction of NAEP policy and practice. Its twenty-four members include state, local and federal officials, educators and members of the public. The statutory mandate charges NAGB with identifying "appropriate achievement goals for each ... grade (and) subject area to be tested under the National Assessment." As outlined in the above discussion of NAEP, a national sample of students in grades 4, 8 and 12 are to be tested biannually in the areas of reading, writing and mathematics.

The Board has proposed changes to the NAEP examinations, primarily in the subject/topical areas covered by the tests; they recommend the exam cover English (a possible combination of reading, writing and literature), mathematics, science, history and geography.

C. NAEP - TRIAL STATE ASSESSMENT (TSA)

In 1990, as directed by federal legislation, NAEP began to collect data about the level of mathematics competency of eighth graders to give educators and policy makers a tool to assess what needs to be done to improve the generally low math performance of American students and to help reach the National Education Goals. Thirty-seven states

chose to test their students with both multiple-choice and open-ended questions, covering some of the costs.

In 1992, the NAEP/TSA will assess math and reading in grade 4 as well as grade-8 math. The National Academy of Education, contracted to evaluate the NAEP/TSA, have proposed that in 1994, a third subject area be added to the assessment, possibly science. Other suggested modifications to the TSA include adding grade 12 and testing annually.

D. THE COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS STUDENT ASSESSMENT CONSORTIUM (CCSSO SAC)

The CCSSO has recently established the State Assessment Consortium. Funded by the U.S. Office of Education Research and Improvement (OERI) through the UCLA CRESST program, SAC is currently exploring strategies that link state, national, and international assessments in an effort to help states network to develop useful tests. Such strategies may include: helping to define the conditions for calibration/linkage; pursuing the concept of NAEP/State collaborative efforts; assisting clusters of states in jointly developing assessment tasks to meet National Standards; and, promoting possible pooled activities among state assessment programs.

While each state will specify which grades will be tested, how frequently, and using which kinds of questions, currently, SAC proposes to measure ability in math, reading, writing, the arts, social science and workplace readiness.

In the future, the SAE will also serve as a clearinghouse of information about state assessment programs--probably conducting quarterly updates--and as a "laboratory" for technical and developmental challenges and issues that occur as states work on non-traditional assessment approaches.

E. STATE PROGRAMS

Most states operate some type of statewide assessment program. The assessment measures are either developed by the state or consist of commercially available tests.

The trend of some state-level programs is toward "Performance-based," "Portfolio," and "Enhanced Multiple-Choice" assessments; however, the level of development and distribution across the curriculum and grade levels varies considerably state by state.

Performance measures are ways of assessing program achievement which require direct demonstration of the target knowledge and skill including: open-ended questions, demonstrations, experiments, and group projects. Portfolio means assessment of student progress and program quality by reviewing selections of student work accumulated in a

folder over a period of time. Enhanced Multiple-Choice items require reasoning rather than memorization to select answers.

Forty states have or are planning one or more of the forms of performance assessment at the statewide level. Writing samples are the commonest form (28 states), but in 15 states, assessments at the secondary level in disciplines other than writing are in place and operating. Many more are planned.

F. PUBLIC LAW 100-297

The 1988 Public Law 100-297 (also known as the Stafford-Hawkins Act) established the National Assessment Governing Board (discussed above--section B) and set provisions for development of a national examination without prescribing the particular model of such a test. Thus, nearly any of the various alternatives described in this paper might address the need identified in this legislation for a nation wide appraisal of student learning.

G. GENERAL EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (GED)

GED tests were developed in 1942 by the American Council on Education to enable persons who have not graduated from high school to demonstrate the level of mastery normally acquired through four years of secondary school study. The program is sponsored jointly by the GED Testing Service, and each state education agency. The Chief State School Officer of each participating state designates a GED Administrator responsible for the program.

Each of the five tests (Writing Skills, Social Studies, Science, Interpreting Literature and the Arts, and Mathematics) uses a multiple-choice question format, and the Writing skills test includes an essay. While the context of test items attempts to measure skills relevant to adult experiences, the performance level required for earning a GED credential is standardized using a national sample of graduating high school seniors.

Currently all fifty states, the District of Columbia, U.S. territories, ten Canadian provinces and territories, and several foreign countries recognize results from GED tests as a basis for issuing high school credentials, and 700,000 candidates annually are tested at the 3,500 testing centers.

H. SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TEST/AMERICAN COUNCIL ON TESTING (SAT/ACT)

The SAT published by the College Entrance Examination Board, and the ACT published by the American College Testing Programs are two tests commonly used by universities and colleges to help make decisions about potential students' likelihood of succeeding in

their institution. The tests measure verbal and quantitative abilities utilizing multiple-choice questions, and are administered several times a year in all states. Persons taking the tests pay the costs and identify those institutions to which they want their scores sent.

The College Entrance Examination Board is meeting in late November to discuss development of achievement-oriented exit tests for non-college bound 12th graders.

I. THE SECRETARY'S COMMISSION ON ACHIEVING NECESSARY SKILLS (SCANS)

Established by the Secretary of Labor, SCANS was asked to examine the demands of the work place and whether our students are capable of meeting those demands. Their investigations resulted in identification of essential competencies and "foundation" skills for 12th graders which should be an integral part of every student's school experience.

COMPETENCIES -- Effective workers can productively use:

- Resources,
- Interpersonal skills,
- Information,
- Systems, and
- Technology.

FOUNDATIONS -- Competence requires:

- Basic Skills (reading, writing, math, speaking & listening),
- Thinking Skills (creativity, decision making, problem solving, etc.), and
- Personal Qualities (responsibility, self-esteem and -management, sociability, integrity).

The SCANS Assessment Committee, chaired by Lauren Resnick, is currently working to define assessments and proficiency levels for the competencies which include: preparatory, work-ready, intermediate, advanced, and specialist. The goal is to have every student leave school "work-ready" by the year 2000.

J. AMERICA'S CHOICE

"America's Choice: High Skill/Low Wages" published by the National Center on Education and the Economy calls for a "Gateway Mastery" test that would assess high-level *maximum* competency, and students who "pass" would be awarded a Certificate of Initial Mastery. It attempts to measure both vocational readiness and readiness for post-secondary academic pursuits. The test, also known as

The state of Oregon, has mandated using an America's Choice exam. The Oregon policy stipulates that children have "common schooling" through age 16. At that point they take the Mastery Examination, the results of which would suggest the direction for the final years of secondary study: college or vocational preparation. Wisconsin and Virginia are also exploring this tool as an integral piece of their state-wide assessment standard.

K. NEW STANDARDS PROJECT

The New Standards Project, based at the University of Pittsburgh is a joint efforth of the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE), the Learning Research and Development Corporation (LRDC), and partner states and districts to begin building a prototype national examination system. Teams from the partner jurisdictions will work to establish performance standards in contrast to curriculum or content standards. Based on those performance standards and on the "3P's" -- timed Performance assessment tasks, Portfolios and Projects (both classroom-based) -- prototypes will be developed and eventually pilot-tested by the partner jurisdictions.

The New Standards Project model would likely call for annual adminsitration to grades 4, 8 and 12, assessing achievement in writing, language arts and mathematics. Initial funding has been received from the MacArthur Foundation and Pew Charitable Trusts.

L. THE NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS PANEL (NEGP)

NEGP was established in 1990 to monitor the six America's Education Goals which were identified by the nation's governors and President Bush at the Education Summit in September 1989. With a concern about America's ability to compete in changing world economies, these goals are to be attained by the year 2000.

A resource group chaired by Lauren Resnick recommended the following strategies for NEGP: a) articulate national standards in terms of performance, b) allow (without dictating) the curriculum and instructional practices to become aligned to the standards, and c) then develop and/or align assessment measures to the national standards. Those assessments would measure English, math, science, geography and history in grades 4, 8 and 12 in intervals yet to be determined (annual testing is likely).

The National Council on Education Standards and Testing (NCEST) is charged with pursuing these strategies (see below).

M. THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON EDUCATION STANDARDS AND TESTING (NCEST)

NCEST was established by Congress through PL 102-62 on June 27. 1991 to demonstrate both its interest in the national debate on standards and examinations systems as well as its desire to be actively involved with NEGP. The Council's purpose is to "provide advice on the desirability and feasibility of national standards and testing in education." It replaces and continues the efforts of the Interim Council on Standards and Testing set up by NEGP.

As described above, NCEST's assessment follows the recommendations of Resnick's group, measuring 4th, 8th and 12th grade achievement in English, math, science, geography and history.

N. AMERICAN ACHIEVEMENT TEST

The America 2000 Strategy calls for tests to be used by the 1993-94 school year to measure student learning. The strategy would follow the lead of the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) and the National Council of Education Standards and Testing (NCEST) in development of "world class" performance standards and two- to three-hour tests designed to measure the results of education. Results would be used by employers and post-secondary institutions for hiring and admission. It is stressed that the result of the effort is not be a national curriculum; the goal is, rather, less regulation of the means of education.

The test is to be given annually to all 12th grade students who sign up to take it. Using multiple-choice and open-ended questions, exam would measure achievement in reading, writing and math.

O. EDUCATE AMERICA

Educate America, Inc. wrote a position paper calling for a National Achievement Examination for All High School Seniors. The organization feels such an exam "would serve two purposes; it would provide an ongoing, annual assessment of educational progress in relation to our national goals and it would provide, for the first time in our country's history, a reliable, commonly accepted indicator of accountability for students, schools and states."

Educate America's battery of multiple-choice examinations would be developed under the belief that high expectations produce high student outcomes.

Educate America has recently indicated that it does not intend to pursue development of its own exam, but rather to defer to other efforts.

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AMERICA'S CHOICE and NEW STANDARDS PROJECT

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The following details the questions which generated the information documented on the attached chart.

II. Origin/Force
What was the impetus for this approach?

III. National Standard
Does this approach include having a national standard of acceptable performance?
Code: N-P = No, but possible.

IV. America 2000 linked
Is this proposal directly linked to America 2000?
Code: N-P = No, but possible.

V. Grades
What grades are assessed or are proposed to be assessed?

VI. All/Sample
Are all students at a given grade to be assessed, or just a sample? If a sample, what type and level?

VII. Individual Scores
Are individual student scores to be reported?
Code: N-P = No, but possible.

VIII. Areas
What subject/topical areas are proposed to be assessed?

Codes:				
	W	Writing	LA	Language Arts
	Ma	Math	R	Reading
	E	English	Sc	Science
	G	Geography	H	History
	BS	Basic Skills	TS	Thinking Skills
	PQ	Personal Qualities	Lit	Literature
	SS	Social Science	Arts	The Arts
	SR	Scientific Reasoning	WR	Workforce Readiness

IX. Measures
What type of assessment measures are proposed?

Codes:
- 3P Performance, Projects & Portfolios
- MC Multiple Choice
- OE Open-ended (short or free response)
- PA Performance Assessment (Writing)

X. Single/Multiple
Is the assessment a single instrument or multiple instruments?

Code: (Calib @) Statistical and/or Social ("Moderation Concept"). Calibration is intended to all multiple measures.

NATIONAL ALTERNATIVES FOR ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

I Assessment Alternatives	II Origin/Force	III National Standard	IV America 2000 link	V Grades	VI All/Sample	VII Ind. Scores	VIII Subject/Topical Areas	IX Measures	X Single/Multiple Instru.	XI Annual Assessment	XII Consequences	XIII Reform Required
A. NAEP	Keppl/1960's/OERI	No	N-P	4,8,12	National Sample	No	R,MA,W	MC,OE,PA	Single	Biannually	4	Neutral
B. NAEP-NAGB	Education Amendment '88	Yes	N-P	4,8,12	National Sample	No	R,W,Ma & NAGB-proposed	MC,OE,PA	Single	Biannually	4	Neutral
C. NAEP-TSA	Education Amendment '88	Yes	N-P	4,8,12	Sample (State Level)	No	All[5]	MC,OE	Single	Biannually	5	Neutral
D. SAC	U.S. DoE/OERI	N-P	N-P	K-12[1]	Either	N-P	Any TBD	All possible	Multiple	Yes, Yes, Likely	(1,2,3,5-P)	Neutral
E. State Programs	State Legislatures & State Boards	N-P	N-P	K-12[1]	Either (State Decision)	Varies	Varies	All possible	Single w/in state	Generally, Yes	(1,2,3,5-P)	Neutral
F. PL 100-297	Fell	Yes	N-P	12	Voluntary?	Yes	?TBD	?	Single?	Yes?	2	Neutral
G. GED	American Council on Education	Yes[2]	No	12+	Self-selected Sample	Yes	Ma,W,Lit,Sc,SS,Arts	MC	Single	When ready	2	Neutral
H. SAT/ACT	College Entrance Exam Board/American College Testing Program	N-P	No	11/12	Self-selected Sample	Yes	Verbal,Ma/E,Ma,R,SR-Composite Score	MC	Multiple, (Equated[6])	Yes, Multiple	2(4,5-P)	Neutral
I. SCANS	Secretary of Labor	Yes	Yes	12	All ("Work Ready")	Yes	Foundations[3] & Competencies[4]	TBD	TBD	Yes	2(4-P)	Yes
J. New Standards Project	"America's Choice" Tucker/Resnick	Yes	N-P	4,8,12	TBD (Partners Decision)	Yes	W,LA,Ma	3P's	Multiple (Calib@)	TBD-Yes, Likely	3	Yes
K. NEGP	President-Governors	N-P	Yes	4,8,12	TBD (State Decision)	N-P	E,Ma,Sc,G,H	TBD	Multiple (Calib@)	TBD-Yes Likely	4,5(1,2,3-P)	Yes
L. NCEST	Congress	Yes	Yes	4,8,12	TBD (State Sample or All)	N-P	E,Ma,Sc,G,H	TBD	Multiple (Calib@)	TBD-Yes Likely	4,5(1,2,3-P)	Yes
M. American Achievement Test	America 2000/Alexander	Yes	Yes	12	Voluntary (Student)	Yes	R,W,Ma	MC,OE	Single	Yes	2	Neutral

NOTES:

1 Defined by States
2 Own National Cut Score
3 Foundation Skills require proficience in: Basic Skills, Thinking Skills, Personal Qualities (see attachment page 3)
4 Effective workers can productively use: Resources, Interpersonal Skills, Information, Systems, and Technology
5 1990 - Math (8); 1992 - Math (4,8); Reading (4); After 1992, proposed 2/3 areas per year (4,8,12) done annually.
6 Different questions are asked each of three tests/year, however, they are statistically equivalent.

ASSESSMENT.1

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